



J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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May 24, 2004

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **BETA FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Beta Foster Care (Beta), a Foster Family Agency (FFA) service provider. The review was conducted as part of the Auditor-Controller's Centralized Contract Monitoring Pilot Project and is the first FFA review completed.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Beta, a private, non-profit, community-based organization to recruit, train, and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once Beta places a child, the Agency is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Beta is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Additionally, Beta provides, when possible, counseling services to children in placement who are between five and 17 years of age. Beta's main office is located in Laguna Niguel and they operate a sub-office in La Mirada. The Laguna Niguel office services Orange County placements, while the La Mirada office services Los Angeles County (DCFS) placements. Our review focused on placements originating from the La Mirada office. During our review, Beta's La Mirada office had a total of nine certified foster homes in which 15 DCFS children were placed. Beta's La Mirada office is located in the Fourth District.

DCFS pays Beta FFA a monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Funding and Rate Bureau. Based on the child's

age, Beta receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these amounts, Beta pays the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2002-03, DCFS paid Beta approximately \$410,000.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Beta was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Beta's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included ensuring Beta received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and ensuring that the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. Additionally, we reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed Beta's staff, the children and the foster parents. Our review also included visits to a sample of certified foster homes to complete a home inspection.

Results of Review

The foster parents stated that the services they received from Beta meet their expectations and the children stated they enjoy living with their foster parents. We also noted that Beta maintained the appropriate staffing levels and that caseloads did not exceed the maximum allowed by CDSS Title 22. Additionally, Beta paid the foster parents their monthly payments in a timely manner.

However, in some instances, Beta did not effectively monitor the foster homes to ensure that the children's needs were met and that the foster homes were properly maintained. For example, Beta's social workers often did not report the children's unmet needs to DCFS social workers, establish employment goals for placements 14 years and older, and in one instance detect conditions in the foster homes that did not comply with CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, we noted that Beta does not always maintain documentation to support the provision of its required services.

We recommended that Beta improve its supervision and administrative oversight of foster homes to ensure the Agency's compliance with its County contract. We also recommended that Beta maintain documentation to support the services to children and foster parents required by the County contract.

The details of our contract compliance review, along with recommendations for corrective action, are attached.

Review of Report

On May 11, 2004, we discussed our report with Beta's management who agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Beta's management indicated that they will submit a corrective action plan, including the timeframes to implement the

recommendations, to DCFS within thirty days. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Beta's management for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (626) 293-1122.

JTM:DR:DC

Attachment

- c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Department of Children and Family Services
 Dr. David Sanders, Director
 Angela Carter, Deputy Director
 Paul Freedlund, Deputy Director
Craig Zacuto, MFT, Executive Director, Beta Foster Family
Tim Bell, MS, Regional Director, Beta Foster Family
Colleen Anderson, Community Care Licensing
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**CENTRALIZED CONTRACT MONITORING PILOT PROJECT
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY (FFA) PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2003-2004
BETA FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

BILLED SERVICES

Objective

To determine whether Beta provided the program services in accordance with their contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 Regulations. Beta is required to provide training to foster parents, to ensure the children's needs are being met (clothing, food, safety, etc.), to ensure the foster homes are properly maintained, and to submit quarterly progress reports to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social workers.

Verification

We visited three of Beta's nine Los Angeles County foster homes and interviewed the foster parents. In addition, we interviewed seven children placed in the homes and reviewed case files.

Results

Beta does not always effectively monitor the children's development in the foster homes to ensure their needs are met and that the foster homes are properly maintained. Beta's social workers often did not report the unmet needs for the children to DCFS social workers, establish employment goals for placements 14 years and older, or detect conditions in the foster homes that do not comply with CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Specifically, we noted the following:

Program Services

- For six (86%) children, Beta's quarterly reports to DCFS social workers did not address the children's unmet needs. Beta's contract with the County requires the Agency's social workers to provide this information to DCFS social workers every three months.
- For three (43%) children, Beta social workers did not document their monthly visits with the children. Beta's contract requires its staff to meet with each child at least twice a month and to document the meetings. The foster parents stated that Beta's social workers met face-to-face with the children on a regular basis but could not remember the frequency of the visits.

- For five (71%) children, Beta's social workers did not document their monthly telephonic contacts with the DCFS social workers to update the social workers on the children's well-being. Beta's contract requires the Agency to update DCFS social workers monthly. Three of the four DCFS social workers interviewed stated that Beta social workers contact them periodically, but the three social workers could not remember if the contacts were monthly. The fourth DCFS social worker indicated she rarely received telephonic updates from Beta's social workers.
- Three of the children were 14 years of age or older. For one (33%) child, Beta did not document the child's employment goals in her Needs and Services Plan. The County contract requires that Beta's social workers assist children 14 years of age or older to establish and/or meet their employment goals, and document the goals in the child's Needs and Services Plan.
- Beta's assessment used to evaluate a foster home, prior to placing more than two children in the home, did not evaluate all key areas to ensure the foster parents and the home can meet the needs of more than two children. For example, the assessment does not address the foster parents' ability to provide quality care for three or more children, or the physical setup of the house, such as the availability of additional bedrooms, bathrooms, and closet space.

Health Services

- For one (14%) child, Beta did not ensure the child received a timely psychiatric clinical evaluation. In August 2003, Beta's social worker recommended the child receive a psychiatric clinical evaluation. However, Beta did not follow-up on the evaluation until November 2003. At that point, the child, who had turned eighteen, declined the evaluation. The County contract requires Beta to ensure that any child in its care with a history of psychiatric problems receives a clinical evaluation, provided that such an evaluation is authorized by the Department of Mental Health.

Facility and Environment

Generally, the three foster homes provided a clean, safe, and healthy environment.

Clothing and Allowances

- For three (43%) children, Beta did not ensure that the foster home provides sufficient storage for each child's clothing. The three children living in one foster home share the same closet to store their clothing. This is a violation of CDSS Title 22 requirements, which states that all children are entitled to storage space for his/her private use. In addition, Beta's County contract requires the Agency to ensure that foster homes provide sufficient storage for each child's clothing.

- For one foster home, Beta did not ensure that the foster parents maintained documentation to support monetary allowances paid to the children. The County contract requires Beta to ensure that foster parents maintain a log indicating the date, the amount of allowance and the child's signature indicating receipt of the allowance. Interviews with the children disclosed that they received appropriate allowances from their foster parents.

Foster Parent Training and Certification

- For one (33%) foster home, Beta's files did not contain current copies of the foster parent's driver's license. In another (33%) foster home, Beta's files did not contain a current copy of the foster parent's automobile insurance. Subsequent to our review of the case files, Beta received a copy of the respective foster parent's current driver's license and an updated insurance policy that was in effect at the time of our review.

In some instances, Beta needs to strengthen its supervision and administrative oversight of foster homes to ensure the Agency's compliance with its County contract. Beta also needs to maintain documentation to support the services to children and foster parents required by the County contract. In addition, Beta needs to ensure that the assessment used to evaluate a foster home's capability to care for more than two placements covers all key areas.

Recommendations

Beta management:

1. **Strengthen its supervision and administrative oversight of foster homes to ensure the Agency's compliance with the County contract.**
2. **Maintain documentation to support the services to children and foster parents required by the County contract.**
3. **Ensure that the assessment used to evaluate the foster parents' capability to care for more than two placements covers all key areas.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

To determine whether the program participants actually received the services that Beta billed DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed seven children placed in three certified foster homes to confirm the services Beta billed to DCFS.

Results

No exceptions. The program participants interviewed stated that the services they receive from Beta meet their expectations and their assigned social worker visits them frequently. The children stated that they are happy with their foster families.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**Objective**

Determine whether Beta's social workers' case loads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed Beta's four social workers and its Regional Director. We also reviewed case file documentation, as appropriate.

Results

No exceptions. Beta's two part-time social workers maintained an active caseload of approximately seven children. Beta's two full-time social workers maintained an active caseload of approximately 14 children. Additionally, the Regional Director, who works in the capacity of a supervising social worker, supervised Beta's four social workers.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Beta's staff meets the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine

whether Beta conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training.

Verification

We reviewed Beta's four social workers, its assistant social worker, and its Regional Director's personnel files for documentation to confirm their education, work experience, and hiring clearances.

Results

Beta's social workers and Regional Director possess the required education (college degrees) and work experience identified in the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, Beta conducted hiring clearances for staff assigned to the County contract.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section



**BETA
FOSTER
CARE**

FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

(949) 495-4829

May 17, 2004

J. Tyler McCauley, Auditor-Controller
County of Los Angeles
Department of Auditor-Controller
500 W. Temple, Room 525
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mr. McCauley;

Subject: Contract Review Response

We have read the report issued by Mr. Brian C. Hendricks of your department. Upon reviewing the report my staff and I are in general agreement with the findings and recommendations outlined by Mr. Hendricks. We will be submitting a corrective action plan to the Department of Children and Family Services within 30 days that addresses each of the report recommendations.

If you have any questions please feel free to call me at (949) 495-4829.

Sincerely,

Craig Zacuto, M.A., MFT
Executive Director